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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation:
implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed
Countries for the 1990s

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73

Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee has considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly on programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73, adopted by the Second Committee by consensus (A/C.5/54/43). During its consideration of the statement, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided the Committee with additional information and clarifications.

2. Under the terms of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73, the General Assembly would, *inter alia*:

(a) Decide to defray the cost of participation of two government representatives from each least developed country in the meetings of the intergovernmental preparatory committee and the Conference on the Least Developed Countries itself through the use of extrabudgetary resources and, in the event that those resources prove to be insufficient, would request the Secretary-General to consider all other options, including, *inter alia*, the use of unspent

balances from the regular budget for the biennium 1996-1997, as an exceptional measure;

(b) Request the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Member States, to make the necessary arrangements, through redeployment and using other resources at their disposal, for the substantial strengthening of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries, through the provision of sufficient staff and resources, with a view to enabling it to organize effectively and efficiently the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries and the follow-up to its outcome, while satisfactorily carrying out adequately its mandates relating to the least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries.

3. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 5 of the statement that any additional costs resulting from a change of venue of the Third United Nations Conference on



Least Developed Countries from Geneva (where the Conference is to held, under the established headquarters principle) to Brussels would be borne by the host country or, in this particular instance, the European Union. Moreover, as indicated in paragraph 6 of the statement, the holding of the meeting of the intergovernmental preparatory committee in New York would constitute an exception to section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, which stipulates that United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective established headquarters, which in this case is Geneva.

4. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's statement, that the cost of the participation of two government representatives from each least developed country to the two sessions of the preparatory committee and to the Conference itself, estimated at \$1.7 million, would be met from extrabudgetary resources; however, should the extrabudgetary resources be insufficient, the Secretary-General's understanding is that he would be authorized to use in the first instance the remaining portion of the resources approved by the General Assembly in paragraph 2 of its resolution 53/3 of 12 October 1998 for the one-time funding of the expenses of experts attending, in their personal capacity, expert meetings convened by the Commission of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD. According to the Secretary-General, the unspent balance for the financing of such experts during the biennium 1996-1997 amounts to \$576,700, as at 30 September 1999, which should be sufficient to cover the cost of participation of two representatives from all least developed countries to the first session of the preparatory committee in 2000. Should there continue to be a shortfall in the availability of extrabudgetary resources for the participation of the representatives of least developed countries in the second session of the preparatory committee and the Conference itself, in 2001, the Secretary-General intends to bring the situation to the attention of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

5. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's statement that the payment of travel to representatives of least developing countries, as envisaged in paragraph 14 of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73, would imply an exception to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII) of 11 December 1962, regarding the payment, out of United Nations funds, of travel and subsistence expenses to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations.

6. The Advisory Committee points out that, under the terms of the draft resolution, the Secretary-General has a number of options for the financing of the participation of

the governmental representatives of least developed countries in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee and the Conference. However, the Secretary-General, in his statement, elaborates on only one of those options, that is, that of using the balance of UNCTAD resources approved under the terms of General Assembly resolution 53/3. In the opinion of the Committee, the implementation of that option may entail some difficulties. For example, while the Secretary-General proposes to cover the cost of participation in the sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the Conference itself of governmental representatives, the terms of General Assembly resolution 53/3 provide for covering expenses of experts attending expert meetings in their personal capacity. Moreover, the resolution provides for covering travel expenses relating to meetings of a specific United Nations body, namely, experts meetings convened by the Commission of the Trade and Development Board. The Advisory Committee concludes, therefore, that the nature of activities outlined in draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73 was not covered in the mandate approved by the General Assembly in paragraph 2 of its resolution 53/3.

7. Under the circumstances, the General Assembly may wish to consider approving the use of savings from the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. Alternatively, the General Assembly may wish to make provision in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

8. Other additional requirements resulting from the draft resolution include a provision of general temporary assistance funds for the Office of the Special Coordinator in the amount of \$541,400 (a total of 48 work-months: 1 P-5, 1 P-4 and 2 P-3), \$70,000 under travel of staff, \$30,000 for public information and \$5,000 for miscellaneous expenses.

9. The Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/54/L.73, additional provisions would be required over and above the resources included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, as follows: \$616,400 under section 11A and \$30,000 under section 26. Under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987, these provisions would represent a charge against the contingency fund. Moreover, depending on the action the General Assembly may take with regard to what is stated in paragraphs 6 and 7 above, there may be an additional charge against the contingency fund.